



Understanding and Responding to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Scotland

Kate Thomson
PhD Researcher
kate.thomson@gcu.ac.uk
@katethomson14



University for the Common Good

What is child sexual exploitation (CSE)?

‘Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse in which a person(s), of any age takes advantage of a power imbalance to force or entice a child into engaging in sexual activity **in return for something** received by the child and/or those perpetrating or facilitating the abuse. As with other forms of child sexual abuse, the presence of perceived consent does not undermine the abusive nature of the act’ (Scottish Government, 2016: 2).



Background to the project

- Distinct lack of CSE research in Scotland (Brodie and Pearce, 2012).
- No coordinated national approach or identified good practice (Fotopoulou, 2016).
- Any other area of pressing public policy being driven with such limited evidence? (Rigby and Fotopoulou, 2016).
- Suggestion that professionals are confused and frightened (Rigby and Fotopoulou, 2016).
- Young people's experiences unknown and voices missing (Brodie et al., 2016).



Project aims

Overall aim: Explore professionals understanding and responses to CSE in Scotland

How is CSE understood by professionals working with the issue?

How do professionals respond?

How do professionals perceive responses?

How do young people perceive responses?

To what extent are young people involved in their care and decision making?

Method

Participants

19 strategic and frontline professionals in police, social work, education, health, third sector agencies and a child protection committee across eight local authorities

Methodology and methods

Qualitative, interpretive, applied research, informed by participatory action principles

Methods

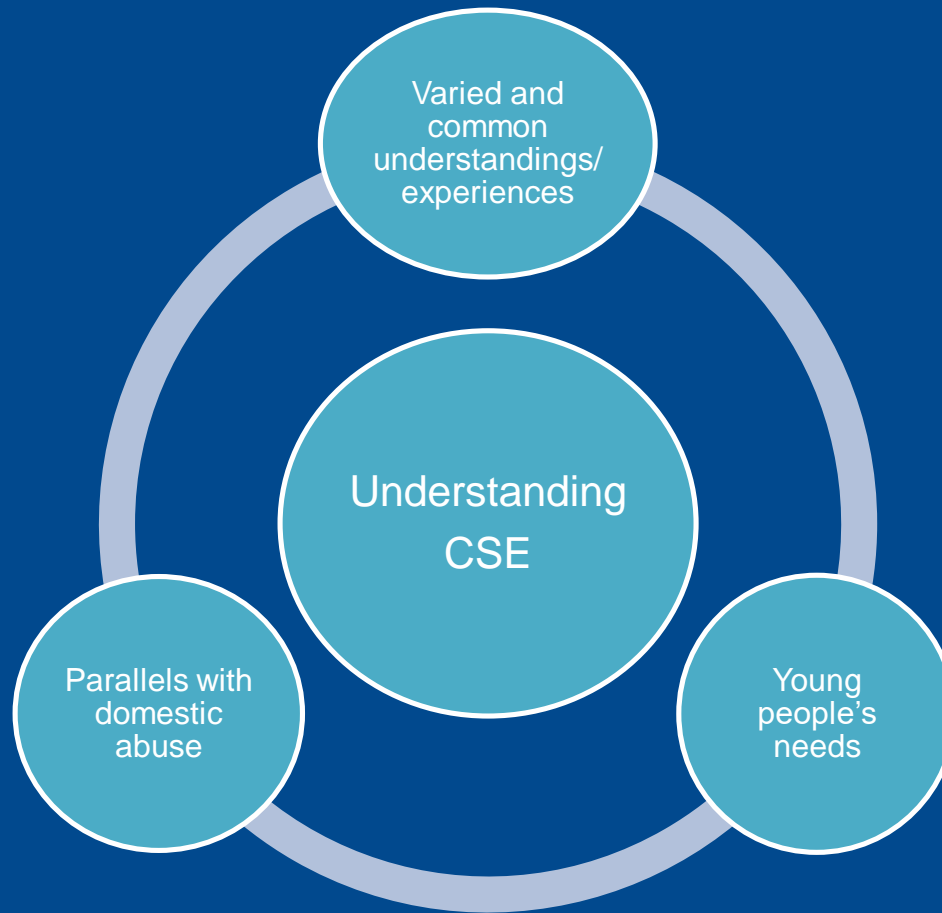
Consultations with key representatives to identify gaps in knowledge.
Semi-structured interviews incorporating the vignette methodology

Analysis

Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis

Findings

Understanding CSE



Participant voices

‘A young person who isn’t resilient, who craves love and attention because they haven’t had it. Not in every case. But they’re much much more vulnerable because they’re desperate for love’ (Mary, third sector).

‘although it’s so unsafe and so traumatic, there’s a safety element because it’s all that they’ve known. So it’s the only affection they’re getting, whether it’s really negative affection’ (Gemma, third sector).

‘...they would actually jump out the window to still get out, whereas people don’t understand that. A bit like domestic violence, folk don’t understand, why don’t you just open the door and leave? My goodness, it’s not that simple’ (Megan, CPC).

Implications for LEPH community

- More consistent understanding of CSE required?
- Focus on needs of young people in CSE training
 - Recognise needs are being met in exploitative relationship/context
 - Greater empathy and understanding required
- Training should also highlight parallels between CSE and DA
 - Power, coercion, control.
 - Coercive control legislation?

Responding to CSE



Responding to CSE

Unique challenges



‘..it’s not about getting a mobile phone, it’s not about they’ll buy me nice fancy clothes and take me out in their really fancy cars. It’s about the emotional transaction...feeling valued and... of worth and harder to then change a young person’s view of that cos it’s their feeling and how do you tell them that that feelings wrong?’ (Sheila, social work).

‘it’s not hard evidence...it’s professional judgement really’ (Rachel, police).

‘Cos CSE isn’t an actual crime in itself. And I think that’s where it becomes really kinda grey and hard for us to deal with as a single agency being the police, and realistically needs that multi-agency response (Mark, police).

‘...there’s very much a you have to wait until something happens before you react, before you respond. I think that’s the thing that has caused us in school the biggest frustration

...and often, well what would you do?’ (Logan, education)

Emerging findings: good practice



‘it’s down to relationships and being passionate and chasing it as well’ (Pam, social work).

‘...it should be very much from the voice of the child or young person, if they’re obviously able to give those decisions to say actually no I’d prefer to wait’ (Jane, police).

‘I’ve got a hotline to the PPU in terms of asking for advice from them and what we should do really in any situations. And they’re really great at just giving advice without racing ahead and doing anything until such times as they feel its appropriate to do so’ (Mairi, third sector).

Responding to CSE: Implications for LEPH community

- Relationships are central to effective responses
- Front line police response not sufficiently trauma-informed
- Greater use of trafficking and coercive control legislation
- Focus less on labels and more on the individual child and their needs and strengths
- Movement towards child-centred responses (e.g., through Barnahus). Reported to still not be enough, still forensic focus. How to balance the two?
 - Need to review & review GIRFEC
 - (Use of dogs?)

References

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Thank you.

Questions and constructive feedback most welcome!

Kate.Thomson@gcu.ac.uk